

St John's Church of England Voluntary Aided School, Weymouth

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113836
Local Authority	Dorset
Inspection number	357434
Inspection dates	10–11 May 2011
Reporting inspector	Anna Sketchley

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	203
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Tim Greenslade
Headteacher	Diana Mason
Date of previous school inspection	16 April 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 13 lessons and observed seven teachers and the nursery staff. They held meetings with members of the governing body, staff and groups of pupils and analysed 83 questionnaires from parents as well as speaking to a few parents informally before school. They observed the school's work and looked at a wide range of documentation, including pupils' work, systems for monitoring and tracking pupils' progress, plans for improvement, and reports written by the local authority. Questionnaires completed by 84 pupils and 29 staff were also evaluated.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The ability of leaders at all levels to continue to drive forward improvement.
- How effective, rapid and sustainable are strategies in teaching, learning and the curriculum in improving the attainment and progress of all pupils, particularly those in Years 1 and 2, especially the more able, and those pupils in Years 3 to 6 who are eligible for free school meals?
- How well children in the Early Years Foundation Stage achieve.

Information about the school

St John's is an average-size primary school situated in the centre of Weymouth. Pupils are drawn mainly from the immediate area. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage and a very small minority are at the early stages of learning English. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is average. The school has achieved several national awards; amongst the most recent are the International School award, Bronze Eco award and Healthy Schools Plus. The school offers a breakfast club and a Nursery that is now part of the Early Years Foundation Stage. There is an after-school club on site operated by a private company.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

St John's is a good school. There has been consistent improvement since the last inspection. The headteacher, staff and governing body are determined to ensure that all pupils achieve as well as they can. Strong senior leadership, a very clear shared vision and joint team effort throughout the school demonstrate a good capacity for sustaining the improvement already made. There is rigorous tracking of pupils' progress. Termly meetings with teachers use data to set challenging targets and plan future learning. This makes sure that all pupils' individual needs are met and that everyone has an equal opportunity to make the progress of which they are capable, including those eligible for free school meals. Thorough monitoring procedures ensure that the school's self-evaluation of what needs to be done is accurate, and this is followed through by comprehensive action plans. As a result, strategies introduced in literacy and numeracy and the practising of these skills across the curriculum have been successful in improving the quality of teaching and learning. All pupils are now making good progress, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, so that attainment by the end of Year 6 is above average. Gifted and talented pupils have been identified and some opportunities are provided to extend pupils' strengths, but this area of the school's work is underdeveloped.

The Early Years Foundation Stage is a strength of the school. A safe, calm environment, excellent relationships and good teaching ensure that all children throughout the Nursery and the Reception class make good progress. This progress is maintained and built upon in Years 1 and 2.

The school's strong Christian ethos and excellent relationships underpin all its work and, as a result, pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils' readiness to accept values and display them is demonstrated by the way they conduct themselves and their positive response to responsibilities in the school and local community and to adopting a healthy lifestyle. Engagement with parents is very good; this is endorsed by such comments as, 'We love the Christian ethos and the fact that the school seems to respond to each child according to their particular needs and abilities.'

St John's School is a very cohesive community with strong links to the local area. Using the expertise gained through working for the International Schools award, it is at the forefront of developing international links for local schools. There are fewer opportunities for pupils to develop an understanding of the diverse cultures that exist in the United Kingdom. The school is aware of this but plans to address the issue are still at an early stage of development. Very strong partnership with other schools and a wide range of agencies enhance and support the learning and social needs of all pupils, especially those most vulnerable. The school has rigorous procedures to deal with the absenteeism of a few pupils but this and holidays taken in term time is adversely affecting attendance rates.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Provide more opportunities across the curriculum, both within and after school, for identified gifted and talented pupils to develop their individual strengths, by making even more use of the very productive partnership that exists with other schools, colleges and agencies.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Children enter school with levels of knowledge and skills below those expected for their age. By the end of Year 2, attainment is average. Evidence from pupils' work, lessons, national tests and assessment data show that attainment for pupils in Year 6 over the last two years has risen. It is above average in English and high in mathematics.

All pupils were challenged well and given good opportunities to use their skills in a Year 6 lesson investigating pulse rate. The teacher used questioning very effectively, ensuring that pupils understood the principle of using different kinds of variables and could apply them in a scientific experiment. As a result, pupils managed their own learning independently and were helped to develop an enquiring mind. At the beginning of a Year 5 lesson open questions allowed pupils to explore the content of a new book and make predictions. Use of partners to share ideas developed pupils' understanding and gave them the confidence to answer challenging questions. Links made to personal reading targets ensured that they practised their skills and made good progress. Pupils in Year 2 enjoyed games as an approach to learning in mental mathematics, demonstrating a secure knowledge of number bonds to ten. In a Year 4 poetry lesson the independence of pupils with special educational needs was promoted well by skilled teaching assistants, and extra support helped them to make the same good progress as all other pupils.

Pupils are very positive about their school and say it offers them a wide range of activities and lessons that are fun. They feel safe in school and say it is a friendly place to be, commenting that 'bullying doesn't exist here'. They know that adults listen to their views and respond promptly to resolve any minor issues that they cannot manage to sort out for themselves. Pupils show a real commitment to the principles of the Healthy Schools Plus award and Activemark in the high take-up of physical activities, healthy lunch boxes and snacks and a very good understanding of how to maintain a healthy lifestyle. They are really proud of having responsibilities around the school and of the serious contribution they make to school life by helping out in the school office, acting as playground pals, librarians and class monitors. Through class responsibility for energy sustainability, pupils fulfil the principles of their Bronze Eco award. The school council actively improve facilities for their peers, for example in the provision of water fountains and playground games. In the close links pupils have with the local church, elderly residents and a school in Kenya and by raising funds for charities, they demonstrate a caring attitude to those less fortunate than themselves. They make an outstanding contribution to the local community and are working on a sculpture for a local park. Life skills learned through these opportunities, along with their good behaviour and basic skills, prepare them well for the future.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

Lessons are well planned and learning objectives carefully shared with pupils so that they are clear about what they are expected to learn. In almost all lessons tasks are skilfully matched to pupils' different abilities and they are reminded of their targets to help them to improve. Resources, especially information and communication technology (ICT), support learning well and highly skilled teaching assistants are very well deployed. Teachers have thorough subject knowledge and good questioning skills; consequently the pace in lessons is swift and pupils make good progress. Marking does not always give sufficient information to pupils so that sometimes they do not know what steps to take to improve their work.

The well-planned curriculum presents pupils with many opportunities to practise their literacy, numeracy and ICT skills regularly. All subjects provide effective opportunities for pupils to learn from practical experiences both in the classroom and through visits and visitors. Pupils say 'school is fun' and are motivated by themed days and weeks that provide relevant and rich experiences, such as the recent work on countries across the world comparing other cultures to their own. They are particularly keen to contribute to ideas for learning and their views are taken into account in teachers' planning. A wide range of exciting extra-curricular activities are well attended and the residential experiences are highly valued by pupils, but opportunities for gifted and talented pupils to extend their skills across the curriculum both in and after school are less well developed.

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The sensitive care of pupils is a strength of the school. Parents show a very high level of satisfaction with all matters of safety and safeguarding procedures are carried out rigorously. Links with outside agencies are very good, supporting the well-organised and effective provision for vulnerable pupils, especially those whose first language is not English and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. This is much appreciated by parents, one of whom says: 'For the last two years my child has been given extra tuition and is now confident enough to sit the SATs.'

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher has built an effective senior leadership team who set high expectations. Along with the governing body they have welded together a strong whole-school team committed to the improvement of teacher performance and outcomes for pupils. Review and self-evaluation are very thorough, demonstrating the school's clear identification of training in key areas culminating in a shared vision and high level of teaching skills. This is confirmed by the award of Investors in People. The governing body know the school well and are fully involved at both an operational and strategic level. They are well informed and monitor the school carefully. They are not afraid to ask challenging questions and ably support the school by taking on responsibility for major projects such as a change in the provision of school meals.

The promotion of community cohesion at school and local level is very well developed, especially through links with the local church, who visit the school on a weekly basis. International cohesion is strong, particularly through links with a school in Kenya involving teacher exchange visits, a partnership with a Swiss teacher, and email links with a school in Venice. Plans to improve pupils' understanding of the cultural diversity that exists in the United Kingdom have yet to be implemented.

The school engages parents and carers extremely well and has a very good range of partnerships with other schools and agencies. Not only do these enhance outcomes for pupils but they enable the school to share some of its own good practice to help other institutions, for example, being a host school for good practice in art and display. Promoting equality of different groups of pupils is well managed through careful monitoring and is becoming more effective as provision and outcomes for pupils continues to improve. Leaders do not tolerate any kind of discrimination. The governing body and school staff ensure that safeguarding procedures are rigorous and regular training and monitoring ensure that this high quality is maintained.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

A warm and stimulating environment awaits children in the Nursery and Reception and this provision is a strength of the school. Good teaching and excellent relationships enable children to quickly become confident learners at ease in their surroundings. In whatever they are engaged, children's behaviour is good as they share quality resources and learn together. As a result they make good progress by the end of the Reception year, especially in literacy and numeracy. When learning how to solve number problems Reception children were surrounded by resources to help them and quickly learned to use the number square to find a number between two other numbers and to recognise number patterns. Their interest was captivated as they ably used puppets to retell a story.

The indoor and outdoor environments are entirely appropriate for learning and development in the Early Years. There is a good balance between adult- and child-chosen activities so that curiosity is encouraged and children learn through their own play as well as from adult-directed tasks. Adults interact very well with children, asking appropriate questions that facilitate their learning. Nursery children became totally engrossed in repairing the playhouse with plastic drills, hammers and saws, announcing 'We are very, very busy!'. Wheeled toys, sand and water play all contribute to their enjoyment as well as to their physical development and knowledge and understanding of the world as, for example, they set up a carwash.

Assessments are carefully recorded and used to plan the next steps in learning for individual children. Parents are encouraged to contribute instances of learning at home to each child's record of development. The good links and relationship that exist between Nursery and Reception mean that planning and assessments are shared, although procedures are currently different in each setting so that the continuity of the provision is not as secure as it might be. Induction procedures are very good in both settings and because the Nursery works closely with Reception in this respect, children are very familiar

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with 'big school' before they transfer. Children are very well cared for and the leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage are good.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

The vast majority of parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire and those who inspectors spoke to personally were extremely supportive of the school. Of the very small number of concerns raised, most were individual cases. A very small minority were concerned about behaviour. Inspectors found behaviour to be good and sometimes exemplary throughout the inspection. Behaviour in lessons is very well managed.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St John's C of E Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 83 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 203 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	50	60	30	36	2	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	54	65	29	35	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	41	49	38	46	2	2	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	40	48	38	46	4	5	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	44	53	39	47	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	38	46	44	53	1	1	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	47	57	36	43	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	29	35	46	55	1	1	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	33	40	47	57	1	1	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	28	34	44	53	6	7	3	4
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	29	35	51	61	2	2	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	45	54	36	43	2	2	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	47	57	34	41	2	2	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 December 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



12 May 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St John's Church of England Primary School, Weymouth DT4 7TP

Thank you for the very warm and friendly welcome you gave us when we visited your school recently and for spending time talking to us. We really enjoyed meeting you. We found St John's to be a good school. These are some of the best things we found.

- You enjoy coming to school and you are polite and well behaved. This is helping you to do well.
- You have a good understanding of how to stay safe and are very committed to living a healthy lifestyle.
- You enjoy helping in school and get on really well together.
- Your teachers teach you well and make learning fun. You have a good attitude to your work and find your learning really interesting.
- You are well cared for and you told us that you feel very happy and safe in school.

All the adults in your school want you to do your very best. Although they know what needs to be done next, we have asked them to do one thing to make learning even better.

- We would like them to provide more opportunities across the curriculum, both within and after school, for all gifted and talented pupils so that they can develop their individual strengths.

Please keep working hard!

Yours sincerely

Anna Sketchley

Lead Inspector

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